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SUBJECT: U.S. - TURKEY PEACEFUL NUCLEAR COOPERATION - SISTER LABS

REF: STATE 166038

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (SBU) We presented reftel points to MFA Energy Officer Gulsun Erkul on October 6. During the discussion, we encouraged the Government of Turkey to participate in the DOE National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) "Sister Laboratory" program for bilateral technical cooperation in peaceful nuclear applications. Erkul reacted positively to this opportunity for cooperation, stating that she would present the proposal to the Energy Ministry and the Turkish Atomic Energy Board (TAEK) for further consideration and action.

¶2. (SBU) In response to Erkul's question whether the lack of a "Cooperation on Peaceful Uses for Nuclear Energy" ("123") Agreement would be an obstacle, we noted that technical cooperation under the "Sister Laboratory" program is undertaken under a non-binding protocol and does not require a more formal and broader agreement. We stated that "123" ratification was still in process in Washington.

¶3. (SBU) Citing other areas of potential cooperation with respect to Turkey's decision to seek to add nuclear power to its energy mix, we mentioned the DOE Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) and cooperation with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) (septel). Scheduled briefings from USG officials to Turkish officials on these topics have unfortunately not materialized to date, but the Energy U/S told us he looks forward to meeting with the U.S. NRC at an IAEA meeting in Vienna in November. Erkul suggested that we advance these initiatives by presenting them more formally to the Turkish Government.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: We continue to approach the Turkish Government with offers of cooperation in various areas of nuclear energy. Turkey ratified the "123" agreement in March 2005, but we have not been able to provide formal feedback on our ratification status to date. Continued delay in providing a formal answer may be perceived by TAEK and MFA as an indication the U.S. is not eager to be part of Turkish nuclear power development and that they should look to alternative sources for assistance (Russia, Canada, France, South Korea). End Comment.

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